THE

Moral and Religious Cabinet.

"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

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AN ACCOUNT OF Mr. THOMAS SYMONS.

WRITTEN BY ADAM CLARKE.

THOMAS SYMONS was born at Denton, in Buckinghamshire, Nov. 1, 1714, Old Style. When he was about ten years of age, he came with his parents to London, with whom he resided as an affectionate and obedient child, till he was bound apprentice to a respectable Dyer, in Old-Street, with whom he honestly served out the term of his apprenticeship, executing every trust reposed in him, with great uprightness and fidelity.

A very serious accident, which Mr. Symons met with when only ten years of age, was the mean, in the hand of God, of producing that seriousness and abstinence from vain amusements and worldly company, for which he was ever after remarkable.—Being one day in company with a gidd[illegible]ad, one of his ordinary playmates, they went into a field to chase the cattle from place to place, by throwing stones and clubs at them. His play-fellow, missing his aim, hit Mr. S. on the left eye; which, bringing on an inflammation, not only the sight but the whole eye became extinct. At first, being ashamed, because of the loss of his eye, he sequestered himself from all company; and finding no comfort in society, he was led to seek it in religious exercises. How wonderful are the ways both of Providence and Grace! Had Mr. S. never lost his eye, there is reason to fear, he might have lived and died destitute of the true spiritual light. Natural defects are often instruments in the hand of God to bring the soul into the way of salvation. Our wise and merciful Creator presses every thing into his service, in order to effect the final well being of his intelligent creatures.

During his apprenticeship, his mind was often deeply impressed with Divine things, and being earnestly desirous to obtain a correct knowledge of the way of salvation, he visited several churches in the Metropolis, seriously attending to the things which were spoken, and conscientiously enquiring the way to Zion, with his face thitherward.

It pleased the good Lord, who has said, "To him that hath (i. e. useth what he hath), more shall be given," to direct his steps to St. Bartholomew's the Less; where there was an old Minister, (whose name I have not been able to learn,) who zealously preached against sin and profaneness, and strongly exhorted to a holy life. Of this man's ministry, Mr. S. ever spoke in terms of high respect; as from it he received much benefit. Though it does not appear that the way of salvation, by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, was even there explicitly declared; much good, however, appears to have been done by this old gentleman's preaching; and, as a proof of it, his church was always crowded. The first Methodist sermon, (so called), which Mr. S. heard was from Mr. Whitefield, at St. Luke's Church.—The text was, "The barrel of meal wasted not: the cruise of oil failed not, according to the word of the Lord by Elijah." 1 Kings xvii. 16. This text, he observed, was, from that time to his last days, literally and spiritually fulfilled to him. Nearly about the same time he heard, and equally prized the Ministry of Messrs. J. and C. Wesley. To these three eminent and apostolic men, he felt a growing attachment, and attended their excellent Ministry at all opportunities, rising early in the morning, and working hard, in order to dispatch his business, that he might obtain leave from his Master to hear the preaching.

In those days the word of the Lord was scarce, as there was no open vision for a considerable time, till the Providence of God permitted the church to be shut against Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield, and they were compelled to go to the highways and hedges. Of these times the present generation can form no ade-

quate estimate. *The Kingdom of Heaven*, then, *suffered violence, and the violent took it by force.* Persecution and calumny walked hand in hand; and they who professed to be on God's side were obliged to cleave closely to him, that they might constantly enjoy that love which is more excellent than all earthly good, and stronger than death itself.

There were then few loiterers. Those who bore the name of *Methodists*, (a title which the spirit of irreligion and calumny gave the people of God; and which, on this very account, they never should have appropriated to themselves), possessed the peace and approbation of their Maker, and *gave all diligence to make their calling and election sure.* A mere profession of religion could not then have countervailed the damage which such persons were called to sustain.

As Mr. S. attended the ministry of Mr. Whitefield, at all opportunities, he was present in Islington Church, when the Rector refused to permit Mr. W. to preach in that Church; who, being pressed in spirit, immediately adjourned to the Church-yard, and preached to a large congregation. It was there he published, that he should preach in Moorfields the following Sabbath-Day; which he did to many thousands of attentive hearers. Thus the earth helped the woman, and the wrath of man was made to praise God.

Previous to the year 1740, Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield had laboured together in the closest harmony. About this time Mr. Wesley published a sermon against the Calvinistic notion of election and predestination, which Mr. Whitefield, who had embraced the opposite sentiments, thought himself obliged to answer. This produced at first a shyness between those great and good men, and finally a separation.

This was a time of sore trial to Mr. S. he was strongly attached to both, and knew not how to give up either. Perhaps few

things, written by Mr. Whitefield, were more assailable than what he called an answer to Mr. Wesley's Sermon. But such was the affection which Mr. Wesley had for his Brother and Companion in the Kingdom and Patience of Christ, that, notwithstanding the advantages which a critique on that Answer presented to his arguments; yet he refused to avail himself of them, and contented himself with writing privately to Mr. Whitefield, from which letter the following is an extract:—"You rank all the Maintainers of Universal Redemption, with Socinians themselves. Alas! my Brother! Do you not know even this, that Socinians allow no Redemption at all? That Socinus himself speaks thus: "*Tota Redemptio nostra per Christum metaphora?*" (The whole of our Redemption by Christ is to be understood metaphorically.) How easy were it for me to hit many other palpable blots, in what you call, An Answer to my Sermon? And how, above measure, contemptible would you then appear to all impartial men, either of sense or learning. But, I assure you, my hand shall not be upon you. The Lord be judge between me and thee! The general tenor, both of my public and private exhortations, when I touch thereon at all, as even my enemies know, if they would testify, is, "Spare the young man, even Absalom, for my sake." In another part of this letter, referring to some expressions of Mr. Whitefield, which he thought particularly unkind, he exclaims, "Is this the voice of my Brother, my *Son*, Whitefield?"

I have already observed that this separation was very distressing to the mind of Mr. Symons, as he knew not to which he should attach himself, their congregations and societies being now completely distinct. From this embarrassment however, he was delivered, while meditating one day on these words of our Lord: *These shall go away into everlasting punishment.*" Why, said he, should they be punished, for refusing that grace which God never designed them? Impossible. From this moment his mind became fixt, and he joined the societies then under the direction of Messrs. J. and C. Wesley.

To many, such a text may appear but a slight ground for conviction and decision, in so momentous a case. But to Mr. S. it appeared quite otherwise; and, for my own part, I scarcely know any insulated passage more conclusive. It relates to God's procedure with man on the day of judgment. Then, surely, the Judge of all the Earth will do right. Here, the œconomy of his Providence, and the dispensations of his grace, may be misunderstood. His own proceedings in that day will make all plain. He even condescends to tell us so long before-hand what these proceedings shall be. He will treat sinners as persons who have wilfully rushed into perdition by refusing to receive, or abusing the grace of their God; and who might have escaped the place of torment, and secured an inheritance among the saints in light. These, and these *only*, shall *go away* to perdition, because they refused *to come* to Christ that they might be saved.—It was in this manner Mr. S. reasoned on these words; and, from that hour, he never doubted that *Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;* and that *every man* meant, *all the individuals of the human race.*

This doctrine he not only thought it his duty to espouse, but, according to his power, he also became a strenuous advocate for it and promoted it, and the great truths connected with it, by his voice, his example, and his influence. As he then fully joined the society, he continued in it to his dying day.

He was soon after this appointed by Mr. Wesley to lead a class, and was a pattern of zeal and diligence. Having now none of the cares and concerns of life, (as he had not yet entered into business for himself,) he spent all his spare time in works of piety, benevolence, and mercy. He watched for the spiritual improvement of his brethren, visited the sick, and spent much time in exhorting and praying with and for the prisoners in Newgate.

This he considered the happiest period of his life; and so much attached was he to this heavenly mode of employing his time, that

it required the strongest arguments of his friends, accompanied with daily pressing entreaties, to incline him to enter into business for himself; which he, however, did at last, though with great reluctance, and not till, from certain extraordinary openings of Providence, he was clearly convinced it was the will of God concerning him. Perhaps there is a certain portion of the life of man, which God designs should be spent especially for the public good. But when the more confined civil and domestic relations begin to accumulate, a man becomes necessarily more insulated in his manner of living, and his cares and attention become more concentrated amongst those of his own household; which, according to the law of nature and of God, have the first and chief claims on the produce of his mental and bodily exertions.

To superficial observers, the former part of such a life may be considered the most useful, because more generally diffused, and consequently more observable; but, to those who think correctly on the subject, each will be considered as essential to the formation of a life wholly devoted to the honour of God, and the good of man. While we have no domestic relations, society at large is our family, and for its interests we should diligently labour. But when, in the order of the Divine Providence, we have a family of our own, our attentions and cares should be chiefly employed to prepare the rising generation to move steadily in, and profitably fill up, those departments of life, through which we have passed, and are passing. Thus an individual ceases, comparatively, from public life, that, from his knowledge and experience, he may be the mean of qualifying several others to fill up his place, and more than supply all his lack of service.—In both states the man may equally glorify his God, and promote the best interests of his fellow-creatures.

Mr. S. from the great activity and steadiness of his temper, was well adapted to business, and few men have ever conducted the concerns of life with more consistency and credit. But, from his great evenness of mind, and general benevolence, he was lia-

ble to many impositions; consequently, to numerous losses; so that he was prevented from ever accumulating much wealth; though the Providence of his God preserved him in comfortable circumstances.

In choosing a partner for life, Mr. S. endeavoured to find out a woman who feared the Lord, well knowing, that, if a man's religious foes be those of his own household, he is likely to have a cross during life, or turn back to perdition.—Of Mrs. S. I knew nothing, as she died about fourteen years ago, which was some time before I was acquainted with the family. From her relatives I have learnt, that she joined the Methodist Society nearly about the same time Mr. S. did, and continued a steady, exemplary Christian, till her death, which was occasioned by a very afflictive disorder, under which she laboured for about six weeks; but which she bore with great patience and resignation, till God, in his mercy, took her to that region of health and blessedness, where all tears are for ever wiped away from the eyes, and the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick." By his wife he had ten children, seven of whom died in childhood. Two daughters, one aged 18, the other 22, died happy in God. His only remaining child, a son, who had been very useful to him in his business, though not as remarkable for piety as his sisters, died rather suddenly, in the 30th year of his age; but there was hope in his death. Of the salvation of the whole, no doubts can be reasonably entertained. Indeed, Mr. S. was so fully convinced of this himself, in his last illness, that it was a source of frequent rejoicing to him, and sometimes even of exultation. A little before his death, he said to me: "Glory be to my God, I have a wife and ten children in Heaven, and I am going to be with them for ever." As Mr. S. always lived a frugal, regular, and active life, he was blest with excellent health of body, and vivacity of mind. Indeed, he scarcely knew what disease or sickness was, for more than 90 years; a privilege rarely granted to any of the sons of Adam. I have often thought that there is much more of sickness and pain in the world, (as well

as of other natural evils), than is essentially consequent on even the present fallen state of human nature. Many, through excess of action and passion, sap the foundation of their constitution, and either exist as useless members of society, or die before their time; while others, perhaps, in less favourable circumstances, make the best of life, by being *temperate in all things*, having *the peace of God to rule the hearts*, and regularity and order to guide all the actions of life. Such persons, especially if born with good constitutions, may be long healthy and vigorous, be rather gradually and imperceptibly worn out with continual action, than pulled down by disease; and thus have the privilege, for which every good man may piously wish, to lay down his body with his charge, "and cease at once to work and live."—I never knew persons more remarkably favoured in this way, nor who laboured better to secure it, than our late eminent Father in Christ, John Wesley, who died in the 88th year of his age, and our lately deceased venerable friend, Mr. T. Symons, who died aged 92; of whose latter hours, it may now be necessary to speak more particularly.

(To be continued.)

PLEASURES AND ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION.

RELIGION is the daughter of heaven, parent of all our virtues, and guardian of all our pleasures; who alone gives peace and contentment, divests the heart of care and the life of trouble, bursts on the mind a flood of joy, and sheds unmingled and perpetual sun-shine in the virtuous breast. By her the spirits of darkness are banished the earth, and ministers of grace thicken unseen the scenes of mortality. She promotes love and good-will among men, lifts up the head that hangs down, heals the wounded spirit, dissipates the gloom of sorrow, sweetens the cup of affliction, blunts the sting of death, and wherever seen, or felt, or heard, breathes around her an everlasting spring. Religion raises men above themselves; irreligion sinks them beneath the brutes: the

one makes them angels, the other makes them devils; this binds them down to a poor pitiable speck of perishable earth; that opens up a vista to the skies, and lets loose all the principles of an immortal mind among the glorious objects of an eternal world.

Lift up your head, O Christian, and look forward to yon calm unclouded regions of mercy, unsullied by vapours, unruffled by storms; where friendship, the loveliest form in heaven, never dies, never changes never cools! Ere long, thou shalt burst this brittle cage of confinement, break through the fetters of mortality, spring to life, and mingle with the skies. Corruption has but a limited duration. Happiness is even now in the bud: a few days, or weeks, or months, or years at most, and that bud shall be fully blown. Here virtue droops under a thousand pressures; but, like the earth with the returning spring, shall then renew her youth, renew her verdure, rise and reign in everlasting and undiminished lustre. It does not signify what thy prospects now are, what thy situation now is. In the present condition, thy heart, indeed, may sob and bleed its last, before thou shalt meet with one who has either the generosity to relieve, or the humanity to pity thee. Thou hast, however, in thy compassionate Parent of nature, a most certain resource in the deepest extremity. Cast thine eyes but a little beyond this strange, mysterious, and perplexing scene, which at present intercepts thy views of futurity. Behold a bow stamped in the darkest cloud that lowers in the face of heaven, and the whole surrounding hemisphere brightening as thou approachest! Say, does not yon blessed opening, which overlooks the dark dominion of the grave, more than compensate all the sighs and sufferings which chequer the present, passing, intervening scene? Lo! there thy long-lost friend, who still lives in thy remembrance, and warms thy inmost heart, whose presence gave thee more delight than all that life could afford, and whose absence cost thee more groans and tears than all that death can take away—beckons thee to him, that where he is thou mayest be also. "Here," he says, "dwell unmingled pleasures, unpolluted joys,

inextinguishable love; immortal, unbounded, unmolested friendship. All the sorrows and imperfections of mortality are to us as though they had never been; and nothing lives in heaven, but pure unadulterated virtue. Our hearts swelled with rapture cease to murmur; our breasts, warm with gratitude, to sigh; our eyes, charmed with celestial visions, to water; our hands enriched with palms of victory, to tremble; and our heads, encircled with glory, to ache. We are just as safe as infinite power, as joyful as infinite fulness, and as happy as infinite goodness, can make us. Ours is peace without molestation, plenty without want, health without sickness, day without night, pleasure without pain, and life without the least mixture or dread of death."

Happy thou, to whom life has no charm, for which thou canst wish it protracted! Thy troubles will soon vanish like a dream, which mocks the power of memory: and what signify all the shocks which thy delicate and feeling spirit can meet with in this shocking world? A moment longer, and thy complaints are at an end; thy diseases of body and mind shall be felt no more; the ungenerous hints of churlish relations distress no more; fortune frown, futurity intimidate, no more. Then shall thy voice, no longer breathing the plaintive strains of melancholy, but happily attuned to songs of gladness, mingle with the hosts of heaven in the last and sweetest anthem that ever mortals or immortals sung, "O death! where is thy plague? O grave! where is thy victory?

A DILIGENT READING OF THE SCRIPTURES RECOMMENDED.

LABOUR not for the meat that perisheth, but that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.—Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all necessary things shall be added unto you." If you are ever so rich, great, wise, learned, honourable: if you are not at the same time substantially and experimentally religious, you are a miserable man. Do you want proof of

this? Look inward, and look forward to the close of life; or turn back, and impartially consider the experience of the several persons, whose declarations we have recorded. Compare them, weigh them, discriminate their characters; reject what is base and unworthy your attention, take alarm at the warnings of the dying penitents, and resolve, by the grace of God, to have a name and place among his people. Let others despise and neglect the sacred writings, as the humour shall lead, do you be much in the perusal of them. Let them dwell in you richly. They will make you happy in your own soul, and wise unto salvation. Search them, dig in them, scrutinize them, let your daily delight be in them. It is the engrafted word, and the word of God's grace alone, which is able to build us up in faith and love, and save our souls alive. Read it as the word of God. Read it with religious views. Read it with constant prayer to Heaven for divine illumination; and, as often as convenient, get upon your knees in secret with the bible spread before you, and, be assured, you shall experience such sublime and ravishing delights, as the most happy and prosperous worldly men are utter strangers to, and as you yourselves can have no proper conception of, till you have made the experiment. Could I be the happy instrument of inducing you to make the experiment, you would bless me forever. And if you could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and possessed all knowledge human and divine; if you could perform wonders like Moses, celebrate the praises of God like David, prophesy like Isaiah, write like Paul, preach like Peter, thunder like James and John, and offer up your souls on racks and in flames like the Maccabean mother and her seven noble sons; if you had power with God like Jacob, and had the valour of Joshua, the strength of Sampson, the beauty of Absalom, the wisdom of Solomon, the zeal of Phineas, with every other qualification natural and acquired, that ever centered in any of the sons of men; yet, without a close, intimate, experimental acquaintance with the sacred oracles, and the great truths therein contained, all will avail nothing; you can neither enjoy true consolation in your spirit now,

nor be capable of felicity hereafter, when you die. Were I, therefore, permitted to give my last dying advice to the dearest friend whom I have in the world, it would be the same which Johnson gave to his friend Joshua Reynolds—"Read your bible:"—I only should add as above—Read it daily upon your knees with fervent prayer for divine illumination; and rest not, till you have imbibed the spirit of it into the very frame and constitution of your soul, and transcribe the precepts and example of Jesus into every part of your daily deportment in life.

This should be the last dying advice, which I would give to the tenderest friend I have upon earth. And if I should have no other opportunity permitted me, I here leave it on record, in direct opposition to the obloquy of the irreligious, and unbelieving world, as a legacy to my friends and the people among whom I have preached the gospel, of more real and intrinsic value than thousands of gold and silver:—*Read your bibles, and read till you love to read. Pray daily over them, and pray till you love to pray.* When the scriptures and prayer become delightful, and the time spent therein seem soon expired, then may you humbly suppose you have made some proficiency in the divine life. But, if you can spend whole days together, without refreshing your soul with some portion of the holy writings; if you feel yourselves cold, remiss, and negligent in private prayer; or if, when you read the scriptures, and retire for devotion, you have little or no taste for the heavenly employ, but it appears irksome and disagreeable, and the time spent therein tedious and wearisome, you may be assured, let your professions be what they may, and the sermons you hear ever so numerous, or ever so excellent, your soul is either wholly dead to things divine, or you are in a backsliding and dangerous condition.

If you have never been accustomed to this religious exercise, it is extremely probable, you will for a time, find much reluctance to it, a grievous struggle under it, and great unprofitableness in it. Be not, however, discouraged; but proceed in the divine employ till you have conquered every difficulty. And remember, these

are difficulties that are common to man; that have been vanquished by multitudes in every age of the church; and that must be overcome by you. Your present comfort, as well as your everlasting welfare depend upon the victory.

The Sum and Substance of Christian Philosophy the Renewal of the Heart *by Divine Grace; or the softening it and rendering it susceptible of virtuous and benevolent impressions, by cultivating the two grand Principles—Piety to God, and Charity to Man.*

WHAT is Christian wisdom or philosophy? Let the apostle "answer; it is to "put off the old man which is corrupt, and to "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteous-"ness and true holiness." We must be born again, or it had been better for us that we had not been born at all. The wisdom from above is the true Christian philosophy; that wisdom which, we are told*, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be en-"treated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and "without hypocrisy."

Hardness of heart is incompatible with this wisdom which is full of mercy. The bosom must be softened by divine influence. Redeem the time, therefore, that ye have hitherto lost in a cold, lifeless, formal, *decorous* religion. Love God, love your neighbour, with the ardour of a sincere mind, an the amiable simplicity of infantine innocence. Seek Jesus Christ with the earnestness of one who is a Christian by choice, and not merely because he was born in a Christian country, or of Christian parents; not because the laws of the land have established that religion, and it is creditable to appear among its professors in places consecrated to public devotion. Be Christians on your pillows, in your daily employments, in the occupation of your merchandize or agriculture, as well as in your church, and on the day set apart for divine service.

* James, iii. 17.

Let Christ, by the Holy Ghost, be formed in your hearts restoring in you the image of God, in which you were created, but which was sadly sullied, or quite defaced, by the fall of the first Adam, and can be restored only by the mercy of the second.

If there were but a probability that these comfortable doctrines are true, a wise man would cherish them; but as they are abundantly confirmed by the written word, by the church, by the learned, by the experience and testimony of millions of pious men; who would not resolve to believe, and if any doubts should at any time arise, to say, "Lord, help thou my unbelief!"

Religion has been, and is, the delight of a great part of our fellow-creatures. It may be ours, if we will duly *apply our minds to it*. Consider with what ardour of attachment many seek pictures, books, the works of art, the objects of taste and fancy. They *learn to love them*, by *applying* their minds to them. Half the *application* bestowed on things, which, at best, are but toys, if bestowed on religion, would make it your chief delight, the guardian of your youth, and the comfort of your age and affliction. You would no longer consider its duties and employments as heavy and dull. You would feel, not only the offices of charity, but devotion, sweet to your soul. The gracious words of gospel truth, of prayer, and thanksgiving, would, "come o'er "thine ear," as the poet says,

"———like the sweet south,
"That breathes upon a bank of violets."

It is justly said, that in devotional offices, passion becomes reason, and transport, temper. Heaven must disdain the cold prayer, the lukewarm praise of insensibility and indifference. The incense must blaze on the altar, before the sweet odours can ascend to the skies. Cold devotion is indevout. Heartless thanksgiving is an insult. What! shall we be warm, and anxious, and sanguine, in worldly pursuits, in politics and party, and dull and languid as followers of Christ, in shewing our zeal in the cause of the

great Captain of our salvation, which is the cause of all mankind, a cause in which Heaven and earth are interested?

Be it the great endeavour of all who would obtain wisdom from above, to conciliate, by *fervent* prayer, the grace of God, which will remove all hardness of heart, the cause of that coldness and insensibility, which is too often most unjustly honoured with the name of MODERATION*.

* " *Because thou art* LUKE-WARM, I will vomit thee out of my " mouth" ——— one of the strongest expressions of contempt and indignation in the holy scriptures. Rev. iii. 16.

Poetry.

For the Moral and Religious Cabinet.

AN ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. ELECTA WOOLSEY,

WIFE OF THE REV. ELIJAH WOOLSEY,

Who died at Brooklyn, March, 1808.

WITH mingled passions, both of grief and joy,
Elegiac notes may now my pen employ;
To trace the path our friend and sister trod,
Which leads from earth, and brings the soul to God.

ELECTA in the blooming days of youth,
Embrac'd, obey'd, and lov'd the gospel truth;
And persever'd, with humble steady pace,
And as she grew in knowledge, grew in grace.

Her person fair, by virtue fairer made,
Adorn'd with beauties that will never fade:
With grace she mov'd in all domestic life,
A tender sister and a loving wife.

Nor did affliction move her constant mind,
But every virtue from its dross refin'd;
Though many months she lay beneath its rod,
She bow'd submissive to the will of God.

When death appear'd to close the mortal scene
She heard the summons with a mind serene,
And did with joy her mortal life resign,
In hope of life immortal and divine.

TO DISEASE.

THOU Queen of terrors beneath whose iron hand,
My groaning soul hath felt unusual smart;
Hath shrunk, and fainted, at thy dire command,
Whilst all thy poisons rankling gall'd my heart.

Yet! O stern minister of vengeance, hear,
I woo thy horrid form, and call thee blest!
I ask thee, trembling, but I ask sincere,
O leave me not, thou heaven directed guest.

Still scourge thy victim, till the chastening rod,
Hath deeply taught the suppliant soul to bend,
And bending bless the mercies of that God,
Who thus afflicting shall refine, amend,
And purify my soul, from earth's dull clay;
Then wing its mystic flight to endless day. ELIZA.

Note.—Those of our subscribers who contemplate a change of residence the ensuing week, are requested to leave notice at the publishers office.

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